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JFK, Cuban Fiasco, And Press

As the smoke clears in the aftermath of the Cuban fiasco, we find that it was more of a fiasco than anyone realized, in fact, and that it has had a considerable affect on the Kennedy administration.

Apparently this pitifully small group tossed up on the Cuban beach was, in fact, practically ALL THERE WAS. Also, in spite of the smoke-screen of comments by party leaders, every newsman in Washington knows the true facts of the decision-making — that President Kennedy, on the basis of CIA reports, ignored and overruled the advice and opinions of his Joint Chiefs of Staff and of both his secretary of state and under-secretary of state in giving a personal go-ahead to the operation.

This was an unhappy example of a quality long heralded in President Kennedy, his independence and "personal leadership."

It explains why, after the debacle, Senatorial leaders of the Democratic party, itself, have virtually attacked their own President, and publicly and bitterly complained that they were totally uninformed and not consulted. Some of them claim to have been even more ignorant of the facts than they were, (unless they are genuinely stupid, and few senators are stupid.)

It also explains, in part, Kennedy's sudden burst of consulting everybody in sight AFTER the debacle—from former President Eisenhower and Richard Nixon to General MacArthur and Herbert Hoover!

And it also has a bearing on the President's fuzzy complaint that the press must by some kind of self-analysis give the people "more information" while at the same time "suppressing information" harmful to the national security!

The press had nothing to do with the Cuban mess except to quote the only people willing to be quoted, and that chiefly the head of the Cuban movement. Our own officials gave no advice, no information, and pretended to know nothing about it during most of the action!

THE TWO BIGGEST PROBLEMS in regard to information dangerous to the national security involve the press but do not originate there. They originate in the administration and in the Congress.

The best source of such information

around is the Congressional Record, and the enemy gets it from that source the same as the newspapers do. Keeping it out of the press would not withhold it from the enemy, but only withhold it from the American people.

Secondly, most such information actually comes out in regards to weapons as a result of the zeal of the administration's own army of publicity men. The real problem of competition between the services—in rocketry for example is not in that direct competition, itself.

The trouble has come out of their competition FOR PUBLICITY which has led them to claim and describe new weapons that aren't even off the drawing board in order to "get ahead" of another service and to publicize every plan and every attempt they make!

This is the same procedure which takes place in their presentations to Congressional committees, and the record is full of data that shouldn't be there.

THERE IS, of course, the related instinct of many people and politicians when they have made a boo-boo, hide from the facts and attack the newspapers because they are the medium that have made the facts known. Public knowledge hurts them as much, and more directly than the mistake itself, and they turn on the communication media as the "middle man" rather than face up to the basic mistake.

All these circumstances have weakened the support of this administration in the press and in the Congress and probably with the public as well.

That is a dangerous situation, especially now when the President needs all the support he can get.

There are solid signs that Khrushchev thinks the time has come for HIM to practice "brinkmanship" and the U. S.'s turn to back down under such pressures.

This creates a great danger, and President Kennedy is the only quarterback we have in this ball game. In his future decisions, let's forget the post-mortems on Cuba and the rest, and support him to the hilt.

It's the only way we can make ANY policy succeed.

Kennedy NEEDS support now more than ever.

C. L. DANCEY